



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Peer Review Report

Richmond West Primary School
North Western Region

2014

1. Contents

2. Executive Summary	3
3. Context	5
4. Terms of Reference	7
5. Evaluation of Performance	8
6. Registration Requirements: Summary Statement	13

2. Executive Summary

Richmond West Primary School is one of just a handful of schools in Victoria that offers a bilingual immersion program in two languages – Chinese or Vietnamese – and English. It values diversity. 62% of students work three days in the English stream and two days in an alternate language stream. A small cohort of students, predominantly newly arrived ESL students, work in an English only stream, yet the school has consistently achieved challenging targets set in the Strategic Plan under review.

It is acknowledged that the long-term success is due to a dedicated team of teachers and a highly supportive community. It is recognised that the workload undertaken by teachers is neither fair nor sustainable in a changing environment. The changing demographics of the community will place the school at a crossroad in the near future which will require difficult decisions around sustainability, work force management and school community priorities. Whilst international research shows improved cognitive development in children in a bilingual learning environment, there are no Australian standards and little research in Victoria which can show why the Richmond West program is so successful. The student data tells a story. Literacy and numeracy results (set in standard English) are equivalent to, or in most cases better than, like schools despite the fact that many students arrive at the school with very limited English skills. Student engagement and wellbeing data suggests the students are positive learners and morale is high. This school deserves to be understood and highly valued. A recently proposed investigative research project by Melbourne University was rejected by the DEECD.

The school has been strategic in the allocation of resources using part time staff to match a demanding timetable whilst maintaining a shared professional learning program under the AIZ ‘powerful learning’ guidance of the former Northern Region. The most successful changes to pedagogy and resulting student outcomes have been seen in numeracy. The school has also developed and embedded a student wellbeing policy which works well.

The Terms of Reference gave the panel four guiding statements with the following outcomes:

1. In exploring the **effectiveness of the numeracy coaching model** it became clear that this model relied on valuable expertise found within the school but it does provide successful strategies. These could be used when strengthening the current pedagogy and building a community of writers, as recommended for the time ahead.
2. **Teachers are using data effectively to track student progress** to make successful teacher judgments in numeracy but there is an indication of lacking confidence in areas of English where teachers appear to be most conservative. Rich assessment tasks in numeracy and Fountas and Pinnell records assist day to day teaching in mathematics and reading. Individual conferring is a formative assessment technique yet to be mastered and tailored to fit the bilingual program streams.
3. In considering **what is required to ensure the school has a clearly documented, guaranteed and viable curriculum** based around AusVELS the panel recommended an audit and update of all existing documents.
4. Indications are that **current structures within the school are supporting students** in achieving expected outcomes. Trend analysis data suggests students may be losing some ground between Years 3 and 5 in literacy. There is recognition that more able students will benefit from sophisticated use of technology and units of study which set high expectations and enable more student voice and choice.

The following recommendations are the outcome of panel day deliberations.

	Panel recommendation
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate a whole school pedagogy and learning framework which uses a common language and common day to day practice. • Embed best practice in teaching literacy using the experience gained from the professional learning which has resulted in improved numeracy outcomes. • Build a 'community of writers' linking to writing process and the notion of 'what writer's do' e.g. writer's notebooks. • Continue to build teacher confidence in moderation to better inform formative assessment for day to day teaching.
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for best use of ICT in the school. • Develop and document a scope and sequence for AusVELS curriculum across the school. • Audit and update curriculum units aligned with the scope and sequence, ensuring they include the use of ICT, student voice and choice for maximum engagement. • Develop an education sub committee to support the above initiatives.
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently revisit the school values and school wide positive behaviours. • Consider alternative ways to survey wellbeing across the school.
Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the extraordinary contribution made by all staff in donating their time to the school planning and administrative duties. Consider how teacher time can be better resourced to allow fairer and more focused professional learning opportunities. • Examine current class and teaching structures to ensure a sustainable and equitable plan for the future which supports the bilingual philosophy of the school and includes opportunity for succession planning. <p>Recommendations made in Achievement, Engagement and Wellbeing will impact on school resources and productivity with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating ICT • providing expertise to strengthen pedagogy through professional learning and to assist with curriculum documentation • accessing sound research which takes the successful bilingual program into account and consequently advances student outcomes.

3. Context

Richmond West Primary School is located in the densely populated inner suburb of Richmond in close proximity to the Melbourne Central Business District. It was established in 1975. A highlight of the school is the well-established bilingual program that supports and encourages children in the development of Chinese (Mandarin), Vietnamese and English, as first and second languages. The school is unique in that this most successful bilingual immersion program, conceived early in the school's establishment, is now regarded as a rare model in Australia attracting many visitors seeking advice at a state, national and international level.

The well-maintained, two-storey, open plan building provides ample spaces for students to work in different learning environments and is set in attractive grounds that provide a range of play space for students. The towers of the 1960's public housing estate form a backdrop to the school, the tenancy of which continues to impact on the school enrolment to varying degrees, despite the more recent gentrification of the neighbourhood in general. The school retains close connections to its Vietnamese heritage well known as the 'Little Saigon' district of Melbourne. It also has strong ties with the Chinese community and through links to Melbourne University, the Chinese Teacher Training Centre and a number of other connections. The school has recently developed a strong sister school relationship with its new partner Changjiang Road Primary School of Jiangsu Province, Nanjing, China.

RWPS has a Student Family Occupation (SFO) density of 0.60 and Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) percentage of 56%. Over the last strategic period both the SFO density and the LBOTE proportion has altered to reflect the changing clientele. The school continues to cater for students from culturally and linguistically diverse families but there is a growing cohort of students whose families are employed in professional careers and these families have specifically selected this school to access the Chinese and Vietnamese bilingual program. Some parents bring their children from some distance away, others have specifically moved to the area. There are at least 23 different cultural groups represented in the school enrolment, predominantly Anglo Australian, Chinese and Vietnamese. The school's fortnightly newsletter is published in three languages, and parent teacher interviews are conducted with assistance from professional interpreters.

The multi-age groups across grade levels and streams (Years P-2, 3-4 and 5-6) reflect the school's team approach to integrate teaching and learning into programs that are responsive to the individual needs and differences of students. The English/Chinese bilingual program operates in Years P-6 and the English/Vietnamese program operates in Years P-2. Over 62% of Students spend three days immersed in English and two days in the alternate language classrooms. The school also offers a Vietnamese LBOTE program in Years 3-6. English only classes provide another option for parents. Among those choosing this option are recently arrived families from northern African countries.

The current enrolment is 216 students.

Staffing has seen several changes over the period under review, including five different principals. The appointment of a substantive Principal in early 2014 offers the school new stability. There are 15.3 teaching and leadership staff including, by programming necessity, many part-time teachers and 3.3 non-teaching staff, across the school. The school employs several support staff - multicultural & integration aides, library support and an ICT technician. There is a full time business manager and part-time grounds staff.

In 2010, the school building was refurbished (BER). Environmental sustainability projects (e.g. solar energy and water collection) have been completed. Playground works completed include an artificial surface soccer pitch, new play equipment, kitchen garden., community gathering space and bamboo garden and other pockets of planting across the school.

4. Terms of Reference

This Peer Review addresses the school's performance on the areas of student achievement, student engagement, wellbeing and school productivity, as reflected in the school self-evaluation. The review considered how the school's current operations, structures and practices are contributing to student outcomes to make recommendations for the next stage of development.

The following Terms of Reference provided a guide to the scope and focus of the review.

1. Explore the effectiveness of the numeracy coaching model and how this can be transferred to a professional learning plan for literacy.
2. Examine how teachers are effectively using data in making teacher judgments and as a guide to their day to day teaching.
3. Consider what is required to ensure the school has a clearly documented, guaranteed and viable curriculum based around AusVELS.
4. Determine how successfully current structures support students to reach their maximum potential in a connected, engaging environment that encourages curiosity and high aspirations.

In arriving at these Terms of Reference the school undertook a thorough Self Evaluation in Term 2, 2014.

Staff and parents were informed of the process at the beginning of the Term 2 with the commencement of the new principal, and provided with several opportunities to give feedback and submit ideas. The process was designed to engage all members of the school community in reflection and to give feedback on key data relating to the school's performance, specifically the target areas of the Strategic Plan 2011-2014. Input was gained from representatives across all areas of the school community, including teaching staff, Education Support (ES) staff, School Council members, students and parents, to ensure that the process was open and inclusive.

In addition, the school reviewer had the opportunity to spend a day in the school prior to the review which enabled a first hand snapshot of operating classrooms and dedicated meeting times with teachers, parents and students.

A letter was received by the reviewer from the Vietnamese community of support for the Richmond West Primary School, and the Vietnamese bilingual program in particular. This letter outlined the rigour and dedication of the community to retain the bilingual Vietnamese program at the school.

The school selected two peer principals for the experience and expertise they would bring to the review panel. This included bilingual education, local knowledge, curriculum and operational expertise. An education consultant with knowledge of the school, the School Council President, the Assistant Principal and two teacher leaders joined the principal and the reviewer to complete the panel.

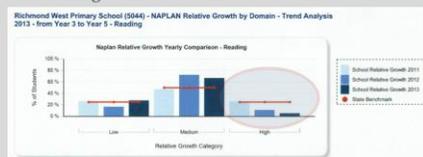
5. Evaluation of Performance

	Panel view of school performance	Panel Recommendations for improvement
<p>Achievement:</p> <p>Achievement refers to both the absolute levels of learning attainment and growth in student learning that schools strive to support. While recognising that literacy and numeracy are essential foundations for students' success, achievement outcomes encompass a broader view of learning, spanning the full range of curriculum domains, as well as students' co-curricular achievements.</p>	<p>The panel began by acknowledging the overall high achievements of the school and congratulated the teachers on their work.</p> <p>Results verify the broad research that a bilingual language immersion program is highly successful for students, particularly in the early years of schooling. Richmond West students achieve at or above like schools and state means in most comparable data. This is despite English Online Interview data indicating a significant number of Preps enter with lower English skills than the state or regional averages.</p> <p>The school has invested in improving literacy and numeracy through AIZ professional learning, coaching, collecting and using data including the introduction of SPA to track student progress. The panel discussed the degree to which shared AIZ <i>pedagogy</i> is embedded across the school and it was decided there was a need to consolidate the 'middle section' of a lesson to ensure explicit teaching, differentiation, opportunity for further support and one to one conferencing to inform formative assessment. The panel felt that this might build greater consistency for all teachers within the school. It would also consolidate the routines and rituals for students as they move from one class to another.</p> <p>All targets set in the previous plan to improve numeracy have been exceeded and indicate students are achieving at a high level, at or above state benchmarks.</p> <p>Teacher judgments are at some variance with NAPLAN data, except in numeracy, which appears to correlate closely. It was noted that teachers felt more confident in differentiating judgments for numeracy. Reading and writing data suggests that the students are achieving at expected level although trend analysis indicates</p>	<p>In making the following recommendations the panel placed an emphasis on developing the parallels between the English classroom and the Chinese/Vietnamese classroom, that this be consistent (within the possibilities of learning a new language) for both teachers and students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate a whole school pedagogy and learning framework which uses a common language and common day to day practice • Embed best practice in teaching literacy using the experience gained from the professional learning which has resulted in improved numeracy outcomes • Build a 'community of writers' linking to writing process and the notion of 'what writer's do' e.g. writer's notebooks • Continue to build teacher confidence in moderation to better inform formative assessment for day to day teaching

Trend Data 2011 - 2013:
Showing high growth in numeracy
(Table 1) and more average growth
in Reading (Table 2)



Relative growth trend data 2011 - 2013



students are losing ground between Year 3 and 5 in reading and writing. The same trend data in Numeracy showed an increase in high growth. (See chart at left)

The self-evaluation emphasises the strong professional learning team culture. Teachers have very limited allocated shared planning time to reflect on best practice. Teachers are consistently motivated to make 'powerful learning' a shared responsibility. Strategies used to embed improved practice in numeracy appear to have been highly successful and provide a model for future improvement.

When asked about success factors, the knowledge and expertise of the numeracy coach, his consistent approach, opportunity for all staff to participate as a group of learners but with individual support were noted. Clarity of curriculum documentation, lesson procedure and step by step assessments added to success and teacher confidence. It was also noted the coach had continually updated his own professional learning. It was acknowledged that availability of literacy coaching has been less consistent and that improving literacy outcomes is a bigger picture, (reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing) requiring more time to become embedded.

Assessment schedules for literacy and numeracy are in place and curriculum documents for literacy and numeracy exist. It is timely that these be reviewed in light of what is working well and to ensure alignment with AusVELS especially for English. It was noted that being 'literate' across all aspects of study is especially important in this school. A suggested common language around reading and comprehension strategies was suggested. The panel also explored the scope for a major shift in the teaching of writing. The prospect of building a 'community of writers' is one considered relevant across the bilingual classrooms. It would also help teachers to further developing their moderation skills. This was recommended.

The school has made a high priority of gathering data from a number of different sources which has assisted teachers in planning for learning, particularly as students transition through the school. The degree to which the data is collected to provide formative assessment for day to day teaching is a work in progress. This will be complemented by the outcomes of the recommendations made by the panel.

The Chinese bilingual component across year levels at RWPS has no research on which to base its success. In the absence of alternatives, standards and assessments are set by teachers in-house. The Chinese Teacher Training Centre at Melbourne University recently proposed a research project to assist the school in identifying 'what it is' that makes the program successful. Disappointingly, approval for the project was not granted by the DEECD.

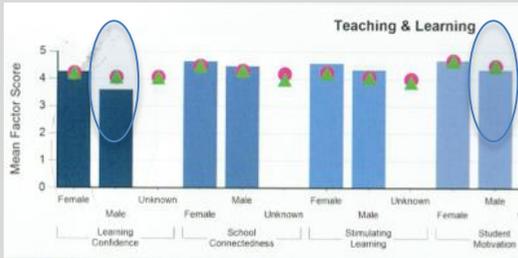
Engagement:

Engagement refers to the extent to which students feel connected to and engaged in their learning and with the broader school community.

Engagement spans students' motivation to learn, as well as their active involvement in learning.

Engagement also refers to students engagement as they make critical transitions through school and beyond into further education and work.

Year 5 and 6 Student Attitude data 2013



The panel further endorsed the school on achieving at or above state mean outcomes in the student engagement and wellbeing data, including parent opinion survey data.

The self-evaluation notes the goal to improve student 'learning confidence' has had limited success despite the introduction of several targeted strategies and programs. 2013 Attitude to School data shows that the 'learning confidence' and 'student motivation' variables are just below the state mean for boys in Years 5 and 6. (See chart on left)

The school has worked to build student voice in a practical sense through leadership opportunities and student council but discussion suggests it may not have sufficiently explored the opportunity for student voice and choice in the curriculum and student learning. The school recognises the need to audit the curriculum units and scope and sequence documentation to align it with school pedagogy and AusVELS. The panel noted this is also an opportunity to extend student voice and choice within units of work. It was felt this would be particularly advantageous for more able students.

Significant early work was undertaken in the area of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning but teachers recognise this has lost the 'wow' factor for student engagement. The school is looking at best practice to reignite the enthusiasm of both teachers and students in the use of technology by updating hardware and software accordingly. It was suggested that Richmond PS would be a good place to visit during investigations. Again, the crossover of technology in the bilingual program has great potential. iPads are already used in the Chinese classes.

The following recommendations were made by the panel.

- Plan for best use of ICT in the school.
- Develop and document a scope and sequence for AusVELS curriculum across the school
- Audit and update curriculum units aligned with the scope and sequence, ensuring they include the use of ICT, student voice and choice for maximum engagement.
- Develop an education sub committee to support the above initiatives.

Wellbeing:

Students' health, safety and wellbeing are

The panel heard that the school values were developed using a year-long implementation strategy. The values are reinforced with

After consideration the panel made the following recommendations.

essential to learning and development. An inclusive, safe, orderly and stimulating environment for learning is critical to achieving and sustaining students' positive learning experiences.

students at the beginning of each year. The panel confirmed that changing staff and different cohorts of students would benefit from revisiting the goals and values more often.

'Connectedness' and feelings of 'safety' were wellbeing improvement priorities in the last plan. The school sites the satisfactory results for wellbeing variables of 'student distress' and 'student morale' as indicators of success in this area. It is acknowledged that for boys 'connectedness to peers' continues to be slightly below the state and regional benchmarks.

'Student safety' fell slightly below the state in 2013 after improving to reach the state mean in 2012 and is an area to be watched in the future. The panel discussed current practice with gathering student attitude data and suggested it might benefit from more detailed feedback from students. Alternatively, the school might seek a way of collecting comparative data (perhaps beyond just Year 5 and 6) to confirm anecdotal evidence from parents and teachers that safety is not an issue in the school.

Students are regularly transitioning as they move from one area to the next. Discussions with parents indicated that some students entering Prep took a little longer than expected to settle into the routines although no problems were reported in the transition out of the school to secondary level. It was explained to the panel that the school goes to great lengths to avoid disconnecting students e.g. by careful consideration of how classes are made up to promote diversity. The transition into Year 5, particularly for boys, may be of some concern with regard to the 'connectedness' data. This was discussed by the panel looking to other research including approaching adolescence, different styles of teaching and higher expectations around independence in the transition to Year 5. Relevant routines and rituals addressed in the 'achievement' recommendations above may impact positively here.

The self-evaluation notes that parent survey data is extremely positive with general satisfaction reaching 95% positive in 2013. The school uses the Ramon Lewis 'school wide positive behaviours' approach to behaviour management and has developed a student engagement and wellbeing policy using these principles. Professional learning was undertaken by staff to consolidate this

- Consistently revisit the school values and school wide positive behaviours.
- Consider alternative ways to survey student wellbeing across the school.

	philosophy. Teachers will continue to extend their knowledge in this area.	
<p>Productivity:</p> <p>Productivity refers to the effective allocation and use of resources, supported by evidence and adapted to the unique contexts of each school.</p> <p>Successful productivity outcomes exist when a school uses its resources – people, time, space, funding, facilities, community expertise, professional learning, class structures, timetables, individual learning plans and facilities – to the best possible effect and in the best possible combination to support improved student outcomes and achieve its goals and targets.</p>	<p>In approaching the productivity discussion several points were made.</p> <p>The school continues to support a highly regarded bi-lingual immersion program in Mandarin P-6 and Vietnamese P – 2. This entails an intricate match of part time teaching staff to a complex timetable. It was acknowledged that the additional time ‘donated’ by staff is beyond the call of duty but is part of what makes for success. Since the majority of staff work part time, the critical shared planning required to ensure the effectiveness of the bilingual program is most often continued, with good will, beyond allocated time. This is not a sustainable operational mode, particularly as long-term, experienced staff may choose to move to retirement. The panel agreed succession planning and sustainable work models are a critical issue in the school. In addition, the school is being asked to balance resources, enrolment numbers and staffing allocations to continue to provide for a diminishing enrolment in the Vietnamese stream. This is the community with whom the school has had a long partnership and is a delicate situation requiring sensitive attention and School Council support. The panel felt unable to offer further advice in this regard.</p> <p>The school has invested in improving literacy and numeracy. This has included additional staffing and time allowance for planning, coaching and professional learning. It is acknowledged that shared professional learning time and expert assistance underpins success.</p> <p>Over the strategic period the school has added to government funding (BER) to make significant investment in capital works to improve the school particularly in environmental sustainability. The school has now identified the need to upgrade the technology systems in the school to ensure they are state of the art for teaching and learning in the future.</p>	<p>The panel made the following recommendations to ensure resources are used with the best possible effect and in the best possible combination to support improved student outcomes and achieve its goals and targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the extraordinary contribution made by all staff in donating their time to the school planning and administrative duties. Consider how teacher time can be better resourced to allow a fairer and more focused professional learning opportunities. • Examine current class and teaching structures to ensure a sustainable and equitable plan for the future which supports the bilingual philosophy of the school and includes opportunity for succession planning. <p>Recommendations are made in Achievement, Engagement and Wellbeing with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating ICT • providing expertise to strengthen pedagogy through professional learning and to assist with curriculum documentation • accessing sound research which takes the successful bilingual program into account and consequently advances student outcomes. <p>These recommendations will impact on school resources and productivity.</p>

6. Registration Requirements: Summary Statement

RICHMOND WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Signature of Reviewer:



Date: 18 /07 /2014

Name of Reviewer: Jan Buckland

Registration requirements to be met by all Government schools	Is the registration requirement met?
SCHOOL GOVERNANCE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic principles <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philosophy (eg. - SSP, AIP) Statement of school philosophy Explanation of how philosophy is enacted 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not-for-profit status <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> 	
ENROLMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student enrolment policy (Specialist and Specific Purpose* <small>[see below]</small> schools ONLY) 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student enrolment numbers <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register of enrolments <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> 	
CURRICULUM AND STUDENT LEARNING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time allocation per learning area (eg. Timetable) Explanation of how and when curriculum and teaching practice will be reviewed (eg. - SSP, AIP, Curriculum Committee minutes, staff Professional Development) <i>(See new SIP and subsequent AIPs for specifics)</i> Outline of how the school will deliver its curriculum (eg. Scope and sequence) A whole school curriculum plan (eg. Scope and sequence) <i>(Under review)</i> Documented strategy to improve student learning outcomes (eg. - SSP, AIP) 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and reporting on students' performance <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> 	
STUDENT WELFARE	
Student welfare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Welfare policy and procedures Bullying and Harassment policy and procedures 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Student safety <i>(Needs to be digitised into one shared folder)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site supervision policy and procedures Excursion policy and procedures Camps policy and procedures Ensuring safety and welfare of students with external providers policy and procedures 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Student care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care arrangements for ill students Distribution of medication policy and procedures Anaphylaxis management policy and procedures Register of staff trained in first aid Record of student medical condition and management 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Additional evidence <i>(Some policies are being updated and digitised but currently contain essential detail)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory reporting policy and procedures Accidents and incidents register First aid policy and procedures Internet policy and procedures Critical incident plan Emergency management plan An outline on how the school communicates policies and procedures on the care, safety and welfare of students to the school community Emergency bushfire management 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

DISCIPLINE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour management policy and procedures (including procedural fairness and an explicit statement prohibiting corporal punishment) An outline of how the school communicates these policies and procedures to the school community 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
ATTENDANCE MONITORING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance monitoring Attendance register 	<i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i>
STAFF EMPLOYMENT	
Teachers' requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register of all teachers with name, VIT registration number and category 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Compliance with Working with Children Act 2005 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures to ensure that all required staff have <i>Working with children check</i> A <i>Working with children check</i> register Procedures to maintain the <i>Working with children check</i> register 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buildings, facilities and grounds Educational facilities 	<i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i> <i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i>
OTHER REQUIREMENTS	
Information about school performance	<i>Evidence provided to VRQA by the Department</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration of an additional year level or campus Changing a school type or location 	<i>Applicable only when required</i> <i>Applicable only when required</i>